

A. Meister**1. General**

Meister discloses a "system for storage and/or transmission of confidential facsimile documents," wherein, when a telephone call is received from a caller through "In Person Only" line, the process is made pursuant to the sub-flowchart of Fig. 7. When the telephone call is not received through "In Person Only" line, the caller side selects one of three modes ("send a fax" mode, "receive a fax" mode, and "delivery status" mode).

If the "send a fax" mode is selected, the process is made according to sub-flowcharts of Figs. 3 to 5. If the "receive a fax" mode is selected, the process is conducted according to the sub-flowchart of Fig. 6. If the "delivery status" mode is selected, the process is performed according to the sub-flowchart of Fig. 8.

2. The case where the call is received through the "In Person Only" line

This case provides the highest security level. A caller is first prompted to input a message number. The validity of the input message number is judged and, if the input number is valid, the caller is then prompted to input a security code. If the input security code is valid, a message is basically produced and delivered to the caller. If the message number and the security code are invalid, no message is delivered.

In this way, the caller is requested to input the message number and the security code for confirmation to ensure high security during transmission of facsimile documents.

3. The case where the "send a fax mode" is selected

At first, one of three security options is selected. The options include "In Person Only" option, "Office Only" option, and "Travel" option.

In the case where the "In Person Only" option or the "Office Only" option is selected, a caller/sender is prompted to input a facsimile number of a recipient, a security code (which is selected by a caller), and others. The system provides an explanation regarding the matter

of the delivery request corresponding to the selected security option, and then requests the sender to input the telephone number and to press a transmission key of the facsimile device to transmit the facsimile documents.

In the case where the "Travel" option is selected, the sender is requested to input a facsimile number of a recipient, a home telephone number, and a security code. It is thereafter checked whether or not a combination of the home telephone number of the recipient and the security code is unique. This unique combination means "a unique combination which would distinguish the present facsimile document from all previously stored facsimile documents which are still in the system."

The system continues to request the sender to input another security code until the combination of the home telephone number of the recipient and the input security code is determined as a unique combination. Unless the combination is determined to be unique, the process is not allowed to proceed.

When the combination is determined to be unique, as with the aforementioned case, an explanation is made regarding the matter of delivery request corresponding to the security option.

4. The case where the "receive a fax" mode is selected

At first, a caller is prompted to input a message number or a home telephone number of a recipient, and the type of an already selected security delivery option is checked. If the "In Person Only" option has been selected, an error process is conducted. If the "Travel" option has been selected and the security code input by the caller is determined to be valid, the caller is requested to input a facsimile number to transmit facsimile documents to that facsimile number.

If the "Office Only" option has been selected and the input message number and security code are valid, the message to that effect is basically transmitted to the recipient.

5. The case where the "delivery status" mode is selected

With respect to an already stored document, a sender is first requested to input a message number and the validity of the input message number is checked. When it is valid, a message regarding the status of the corresponding facsimile document, namely, as to whether or not it has been delivered.

B. The Claimed Invention Is Distinguishable Over Meister

The system of Meister is adapted to request a sender to input a security code at each document transmission and, according to such a security code, enable transmission reception of document between two facsimile devices with various levels of security. The number of a security code, which is disclosed in the Abstract of Meister that "the number does not identify a subscriber or a mailbox but identifies a fax message," does not identify a mailbox.

Claim 1 is distinguishable over Meister in at least the following points.

1. A mass memory storage unit 25 in the system of Meister stores facsimile documents as well as various accompanying data (message number, security code, types of security delivery options, etc.). However, Meister fails to disclose an image data memory that includes a plurality of memory boxes each assigned a previously determined box number, as claimed in claim 1.

More specifically, the mass memory storage unit 25 in Meister only stores sequential facsimile information received through a data network 23 and a data line 24, which is disclosed at col. 8, lines 10-13. Therefore, Meister does not inherently include the concept that a plurality of memory boxes assigned a previously determined box number are provided. It is unreasonable to lump the facsimile documents together with various accompanying data and regard them as corresponding to a memory box.

2. When the system of Meister receives a telephone call from a caller through the "In Person Only" line, the system requests the caller to input a message number and a security

code, as shown in the sub-flowchart of Fig. 7. When not receiving a call through the "In Person Only" line, the system prompts the caller/sender to select one of the three modes ("send a fax" mode, "receive a fax" mode, and "delivery status" mode). In addition, whichever mode is selected, according to each sub-flowchart, the system requests the caller/sender to input a facsimile number of a recipient, a security code, a message number, and others.

Thus, the Meister system is constructed to request a caller/sender to serially, sequentially input necessary data and transmit messages and facsimile documents based on the input data. If the necessary data from the caller/sender is not input, an effective process could not be executed.

Contrarily, the facsimile device of claim 1 is adapted to transfer first image data and second image data to a calling side based on a transfer command which identifies a memory box in response to a box number from another facsimile device and instructs the transfer of first image data in the identified memory box to the calling side. At this time, the device does not need sequential data input by the caller. Accordingly, the image data stored in the memory box can be transferred to the calling side promptly by a simple process.

For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the claimed invention is distinguishable over the applied art. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103 is respectfully requested.

II. CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons discussed above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance.